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International Cocoa Verification Board Selects Verifiers of Certification of Labor Conditions in West African Cocoa Production

The International Cocoa Verification Board (ICVB) provisionally selected the two organizations which will be charged with verifying the certification of labor conditions in cocoa production in Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire, a critical element towards implementation of the Harkin-Engel Protocol. The selected organizations will conduct an independent verification of the data and methodology utilized in the surveys conducted by the Governments of Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire. After the verification, the organizations will present their findings in an uncensored report to the public and make recommendations based on findings to strengthen future remediation efforts.

In order to select the verifiers, the ICVB scored each application based on its demonstrated grasp of child-centered methodologies, understanding of the cultural conditions in both Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire, and capacity to carry out both field research and data analysis, among other qualifications. The Request for Proposals is available in full at the ICVB's beta-site, www.cocoaverification.net. The shortlisted candidates were then invited to present their qualifications at the April ICVB meeting.

During the meeting, the full ICVB questioned the applicants for detailed information regarding each organization's knowledge specific to cocoa production and their data gathering methods (particularly regarding children). The selected organizations exhibited comprehensive understanding of the challenges surrounding verification and expertise in data analysis. Each potential verifier was required to have local partners to ensure that they could efficiently and appropriately engage with cocoa-producing communities on the ground.

The Board was guided in this process by the results of Verité's March 31st NGO-Industry Consultative Meeting "Why Verify? Making Cocoa Verification Count." The NGO, industry, and government representatives who participated in this meeting engaged in robust dialogue about how best to ensure a transparent and effective verification process. These suggestions were presented to the ICVB prior to their meeting.

The names of the selected verifiers will be released pending the final approval of their contract with the ICVB.

Other ICVB accomplishments during the meeting included the selection of the Board Chairs, Treasurer, and Secretary and Committee Chairs and Alternates, as well as creating a work plan for each committee to accomplish in the months following the meeting.

About the ICVB

The International Cocoa Verification Board (ICVB) was convened in December, 2007. This multi-stakeholder body includes nine representatives from NGOs, academia, trade unions and industry. The nine Board members are: Anthony Fofie, Ghana Cocoa Board; Amouan Assouan Acquah, Special Counselor to the Prime Minister (Cote d'Ivoire); Stephen Ayidiya, University of Ghana-Legon; Andrews Addoquaye Tagoe, General Agricultural Workers Union (Ghana); Alice Koiho Kipre, Afrique Secours et Assistance (Cote d'Ivoire); Diane Mull, International Initiative on Exploitive Child Labor (USA); John Trew, CARE International (USA); Jeff Morgan, Mars, Inc. (USA); and Isabelle Adam, European Cocoa Association (Belgium).

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